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NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION: EFFECTS OF DISASTERS ON MODERN SOCIETIES

Technical session

Addendum

Coordination and integration of international projects on risk assessment in megacities

Summary of presentation by Mr. Yoshikazu Kitagawa, Director, International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering

1. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was launched in 1990. Since then, various international projects on risk assessment in megacities have been proposed and they are currently in the process of implementation. Although these projects are considered significant when examined individually, their weakness is revealed in terms of mutual relevancy promoted on a global scale.

2. In an attempt to develop international cooperation for natural disaster reduction throughout the world during and even after the close of the latter half of the Decade, it is desirable to make an accurate assessment of natural disaster risk in the various regions by using an integrated approach, as well as mutual comparisons, and exchange of data.

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3. Among the megacities of developing countries are those located in highly vulnerable regions. The number of human lives lost by natural disasters exceeded 4 million in the 1990s; these victims of natural disaster are concentrated in the Asia and Pacific region and account for more than 80 per cent of the total. The number of deaths from earthquakes is more than 50 per cent of total deaths. A major concern is that if a major earthquake were to strike these megacities in the future, it could cause immeasurable damage to both life and property.

4. The International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering has been implementing training programmes on seismology and earthquake engineering for over 30 years. These programmes have been designed for researchers and engineers from earthquake-prone metropolitan areas, and they have developed a worldwide human network of 843 participants, from 57 countries, who have completed the programme. Recently, as a result of the bilateral cooperation between Japan and other countries, construction and improvement of research institutions on earthquake disaster prevention have been substantially promoted throughout the world.

5. By developing such human networks and inter-institutional friendship even further, it will be possible to carry out risk assessment through a consistent integrated approach on earthquake disasters. Within the limited period of time remaining in the Decade, it is proposed that there is a need to select representative megacities that are highly vulnerable to earthquakes in developing countries and to develop earthquake disaster risk assessment through international cooperation.